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WARMINSTER URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1925.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to submit to you my Annual Report on the Public Health of the District. In accordance with the requirements of the Ministry of Health my report also contains a summary of matters relating to Public Health during the past five years.

Natural & Social Conditions of the Area.

Area (in acres)	6564
Population (Census 1921)	5410
Population (estimated 1925)	5451
Number of inhabited houses (1921)	1367
Number of families or separate occupiers (1921)	1336
Rateable Value	£24808
Sum represented by a penny rate	£103

The industries of the District include an iron foundry and agricultural implement works, saw-mills, casein factory, motor works & two glove factories which employ over one hundred women and girls. Since 1921 three new industries have been started, namely, a wood-distilling plant, a chair factory in which ex-service men are employed, and a silk weaving factory which now takes the place of the shirt factory which was closed down during the War.

Unemployment due to general trade and agricultural depression has been very prevalent during the past five years. It was most acute in this District when the work provided by the breaking up of the Military Camps in the neighbourhood ceased.

Various important works have been carried out by the Council which relieved the distress to a great extent. These include the building of 44 houses under the Addison Scheme, the laying-out of paths and building of shelters on Arn Hill, the construction of a new cattle Market in Station Road, and the laying-out of the Lake and Pleasure Grounds, which was opened in 1924. Work was also provided by the road improvements carried out by the County Council at Black Dog Hill & Biss Bottom.

The most notable improvements during the period have been the introduction of electric lighting and the opening of the Lake Pleasure Grounds. The latter provides opportunity for swimming & games & other out-door recreations & therefore cannot fail to be of benefit to the Town from a Public Health point of view.

EXTRACTS FROM VITAL STATISTICS.

	Male	Female	Total	Rate
Births				
Total	36	36	72	13.2
Illegitimate	-	1	1	-
Deaths	25	39	64	11.72
Deaths of infants under 1 year of age	5	2	7	Rate per 1000 births 97.2

The number of births & deaths for the five years 1921-25 were as follows :-

	Births	Rate per 1000 population	Deaths	Rate per 1000
1921	84	15.5	62	11.4
1922	76	14.0	48	8.84
1923	82	15.04	52	9.54
1924	61	11.07	69	12.5
1925	72	13.2	64	11.72

The birth-rates & death-rates are low & the former appears to be declining, but the figures are too small to allow of the drawing of any general inference from them.

The chief causes of death during the year 1925 were as follows :-

	Male	Female	Total
Tuberculosis of Respiratory System	-	5	5
Cancer	4	12	16
Heart Disease	2	5	7
Bronchitis	4	3	7
Pneumonia	2	1	3
Acute & chronic Nephritis	-	3	3

There was one death from puerperal sepsis, the second death from this cause since 1921. There is an apparent increase in the number of deaths from cancer.

Prevalence of, and Control over, Infectious Diseases.

During 1925 the following cases of infectious disease were notified :-

Scarlet Fever	4
Diphtheria	5
Puerperal Fever	1
Erysipelas	3

All the cases, except those of erysipelas, were removed to the Warminster Joint Isolation Hospital. There was an epidemic of chicken-pox in the Autumn. but otherwise there have been few cases of infectious disease during the year. During the five years since 1921 there have been no considerable epidemics. In January & February 1923 there was an outbreak of Scarlet Fever which was traced to a milk supply. No further cases occurred after the supply had been stopped.

Arrangements for Isolation & Disinfection.

The Warminster Joint Isolation Hospital porvides sufficient accommodation for infectious cases under ordinary circumstances. The Hospital has 24 beds in two blocks. A motor ambulance was provided in 1924. All cases of scarlet fever & diphtheria have been sent to the hospital since it was opened in 1915. The hospital has an excellent Nursing Staff and is healthily situated on high ground. The results of treatment at it have been uniformly good and this I attribute mainly to efficient nursing. There have been no return cases.

Disinfection of houses is carried out by the Council.

The pathological & bacteriological examinations required by the Isolation Hospital are carried out by the Clinical Research Association.

Tuberculosis.

Four cases of pulmonary tuberculosis were notified in 1925. There were no cases of non-pulmonary tuberculosis.

The number of deaths from pulmonary tuberculosis was five - all females.

The number of cases of tuberculosis on the register was 19, as follows :-

Pulmonary Tuberculosis		NoN-pulmonary	
Males	Females	Males	Females
7	10	2	-

Cases of tuberculosis are sent to the Dispensary at Trowbridge & are visited at their homes by the County Tuberculosis Officers. Suitable cases are sent for treatment to the Winsley Sanatorium or Harnwood Hospital.

General Provision of Health Services in the Area.

Hospitals.

The Warminster Joint Isolation Hospital is provided by the Local Authorities. It has accommodation for 24 patients. A motor ambulance is kept for the conveyance of infectious cases.

The Warminster Cottage Hospital (17 beds) provides for general medical & surgical cases. The accommodation is now insufficient for the needs of the District & the question of the provision of increased accommodation, which is urgent, is now under consideration.

There is no Maternity and Child Welfare Centre nor are there any beds available at the Hospital for maternity cases.

The Nursing Association provides two nurses for home & maternity nursing.

Officers.

Three Public Health Officers are employed by the Local Authority - a Medical Officer of Health, a Sanitary Inspector, and a Meat Inspector - all part-time.

Sanitary Circumstances of the Area.

Water There is an excellent supply obtained from springs situated north-west of Shearwater. The water is pumped to a resevoir at Botany, whence it flows by gravitation to the Town. There has been no shortage during the past five years.

Rivers & Streams There have been no complaints of pollution.

Drainage & Sewerage The sewage is treated by land irrigation. The effluent when tested has usually been satisfactory. A number of suggestions were recently made by the County Medical Officers as to the working of the Farm & these are being carried out, and it is hoped that they will lead to an improvement in the treatment of the sewerage.

Closet Accommodation A large number of houses are not yet connected with the sewer. Most of these have pail closets.

Scavenging House Refuse is collected by the Council's Carts twice weekly & conveyed to a tip two miles away.

Sanitary Inspections Inspections by the Sanitary Officers are given in tabular form under Housing Statistics.

Premises controlled by Regulations or Bye-laws There is one common lodging-house, which is clean & well-kept.

Offensive Trades The only offensive trade is a Knacker's Yard, situated some distance outside the Town. This has been kept in a satisfactory condition.

Food Inspection.

(a) Milk Supply A considerable portion of the milk produced in the District is sent away to the large towns or factories. There is an adequate supply for local consumption.

There are 26 cowkeepers & milk sellers in the District. The cow-sheds & dairies are regularly inspected. The regulations as regards limewashing have been carried out. Some of the cowsheds are excellent & well-kept, but in many there is much room for improvement in general cleanliness, drainage & ventilation.

(b) Meat An Inspector of Meat was appointed by the Council in August. Under the Public Health (Meat) Regulations 1924 a large number of visits have to be paid to the slaughterhouses in the District & many inspections made. These have been carried out most satisfactorily by your Inspector. On an average he has examined 200 carcases per week. During the last quarter of the year disaese was found in 152 carcases. The number of whole carcases condemned was 6 and of part carcases 125. 56 parts were also condemned. In all cases there has been voluntary surrender of the condemned meat. Regular inspections of slaughter-houses & shops have been made. As regards shops & stores the Meat Regulations 1924 have been carried out.

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(c) There are 10 bakehouses in the District. All have been found in a satisfactory atate as regards cleanliness.

Housing.

I General Housing Conditions in the Area. The numbers of houses built during the past five years is 74, of which 45 were built by the Council & 29 by private owners. There is still a considerable shortage of houses & until this is overcome it will be impossible to close many unfit houses which should be condemned. The shortage also adds to the difficulty of getting extensive repairs carried out owing to the lack of alternative accommodation.

II Overcrowding. There has been very little overcrowding. A few cases only have been reported.

III Fitness of Houses. The general standard of housing is fair. There are, however, a large number of houses which should be condemned & many others which need extensive repairs. The chief defects are low ceilings, dampness, defective lighting & ventilation, and general disrepair.

Housing Statistics for the year 1925.

Number of new houses erected during the year :

(a) Total (including nos. given separately under (b)) 12

(b) With State Assistance under the Housing Acts :

(I) By the Local Authority nil

(II) By other bodies or persons 7

1. Unfit dwelling-houses.

Inspection (1) Total no. of dwelling-houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts) 10

(2) No. of dwelling-houses inspected & recorded under the Housing (Inspection of District) Regns. 1910 or the Housing Concolidated Regns. 1925 3

(3) No. of dwelling-houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation 2

(4) No. of dwelling-houses (exclusive of those referred to under the preceding sub-head) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation 5

2. Remedy of defects without Service of formal notices.

No. of defective dwelling-houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their Officers 5

3. Action under Statutory Powers.

A. Proceedings under section 3 of the Housing Act 1925.

(1) No. of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs 10

(2) No. of dwelling-houses which were rendered fit after service of formal notice :

(a) By owners 5

(b) By Local Authority nil

(3) No. of dwelling-houses in respect of which Closing Orders became operative in pursuance of declarations by owners of intention to close 3

B. Proceedings under Public Health Acts.

(1) No. of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied nil

(2) No. of dwelling-houses in which defects were remedied after service of formal notices nil

C. Proceedings under sections 11, 14, & 15 of the Housing Act 1925.

(1) No. of representations made with a view to the making of Closing Orders 2

(2) No. of dwelling-houses in respect of which Closing Orders were made 2

(3) No. of dwelling-houses in respect of which Closing Orders were determined, the houses having been rendered fit	1
(4) No. of dwelling-houses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made	nil
(5) No. of dwelling-houses demolished in pursuance of Demolition Orders	nil.

I have the honour to be,
Mr. Chairman & Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,
W. L. HOGAN,
Medical Officer of Health.